

**For the homeowner: Should you skip your preemergence herbicide applications this year?****March 29, 2017**

What is the first sign of spring? There are many potential indicators, but my recent blabber of properly timed preemergence herbicide (PRE) applications is another sure sign. I've discussed PRE timing a lot recently, and with good reason – the management practice is on everyone's mind as we approach the traditional application window in Nebraska (April 15<sup>th</sup> to the first week of May; more info [here](#)). However, there are times when these useful herbicides are best left on the shelf – especially in the following two, *opposing* scenarios.

**1. Skip PRE if you are trying to establish turf.** This includes dormant seeding in winter and seeding (or even sodding) this spring. The various *Crabgrass Preventers* available at hardware stores often include pendimethalin, prodiamine, or dithiopyr. Each of these herbicides will prevent germination of desirable lawn species, restrict rooting of newly laid sod, and will injure new seedlings if applied too soon after seeding. When used appropriately, products containing siduron or mesotrione can safely reduce the establishment of crabgrass in tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass seedbeds, and mesotrione is safe in buffalograss seedbeds.



**Figure 1.** Skip PRE if you have damaged areas you need to seed this spring.



**Figure 2.** Skip PRE if you have a healthy, dense lawn managed with proper cultural methods. Crabgrass will not likely be able to establish.

**2. Skip PRE if you already have a great lawn –** pat yourself on the back, instead. The best “herbicide” is a healthy, dense lawn free of voids that allow weeds to establish. In this case, the underlying issues that often lead to advanced crabgrass establishment have been rectified. You don't need PRE to keep weeds away. Yes, a few crabgrass plants may emerge in isolated areas if you skip PRE this year, but these plants are easily controlled by hand weeding or with postemergence herbicides. Crabgrass will not take over a healthy lawn.

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